

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1286

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 5075

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM, AR  
SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON SOLARI YRIGOYEN'S STATEMENTS

REF: STATE 152143

1. THE COMMENTS MADE BY FORMER ARGENTINE SENATOR SOLARI YRIGOYEN IN HIS MEETING WITH THE DEPUTY SECRETARY (REFTEL) ARE A CONVENIENT PEG FOR SOME EMBASSY COMMENTS. BY COMMENTING WE DO NOT IMPLY A QUESTIONING OF SOLARI'S CONVICTION OR SINCERITY, WHICH HAVE BEEN LONG ESTABLISHED. SOME OF HIS POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES DO MERIT FURTHER OBSERVATION.

2. WE EXPECT THAT PRIMARY CREDIT FOR SOLARI'S RELEASE (PARA 2 REFTEL) SHOULD INDEED GO TO THE VENEZUELAN, WHO APPARENTLY DECLINED TO FIRM-UP VIDELA'S VISIT UNTIL GOA COULD CONFIRM HE WOULD BE RELEASED. SOLARI'S COMMENTS (PARA 7) ABOUT A CIVILIAN FRONT FOR DEMOCRACY MAY RELATE TO SOME ILL-DEFINED EFFORTS OF YOUNGER MEMBERS OF THE RADICAL PARTY TO BE IDENTIFIED WITH AND RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES OF THE COMMON MARKET COUNTRIES. WE SEE NO EVIDENCE HERE THAT "ALL THE PARTIES ARE FORMING A CIVILIAN FRONT FOR DEMOCRACY", ELECTORAL OR OTHERWISE.

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3. AS FOR THE NUMBER OF PRISONERS (PARA 9), HIS ESTIMATE OF 15,000 PRISONERS WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CONFIRM BUT SHOULD BE COMPARED WITH OTHER ESTIMATES. THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS SAYS THAT GOA ACKNOWLEDGES HOLDING SOME 4,500 PRISONERS, INCLUDING THOSE DETAINED FOR CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES AND OTHERS DETAINED WITH FORMAL CHARGES UNDER STATE OF SIEGE PROVISIONS. (GOA DOES NOT ACKNOWLEDGE "POLITICAL PRISONERS"; ALL OF ITS DETAINEES ARE

SAID TO BE SUBVERSIVE OR ECONOMIC CRIMINALS.) THAT NUMBER IS CONSISTENT WITH THE KNOWN CAPACITY OF GOA PRISON FACILITIES. HOWEVER, A NUMBER OF PERSONS ARE BELIEVED TO BE HELD SECRETLY AND INCOMMUNICADO IN UNOFFICIAL DETENTION CENTERS AND WITHIN MILITARY AND POLICE INSTALLATIONS. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IN JANUARY, 1977 ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE BETWEEN 5,000 AND 6,000 "POLITICAL PRISONERS", ONLY ONE-THIRD OF WHOM HAVE BEEN FORMALLY CHARGED. THE DIFFICULTY OF ACCURATELY ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF PRISONERS--SECRET OR OFFICIAL--IS COMPOUNDED BY THE FACT THAT OF THE MANY THOUSANDS OF PERSONS ALLEGEDLY DISAPPEARED IN ARGENTINA, SOME ARE SECRETLY IN CUSTODY OF ARGENTINE OFFICIALS, OTHERS HAVE FLED THE COUNTRY OR GONE INTO HIDING, OTHERS HAVE DIED BY SUICIDE OR TERRORIST GROUP RETALIATION AND UNKNOWN NUMBERS HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED BY SECURITY FORCES.

4. SOLARI'S SON, WHO IS DUE FOR MILITARY SERVICE, MAY INDEED FIND IT DIFFICULT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. THE GOA, AS A GENERAL PRACTICE, IS ALERT TO PREVENT MILITARY-AGE YOUTH FROM EVADING THEIR SERVICE OBLIGATIONS--EVEN WHERE NO POLITICAL QUESTION EXISTS.

5. REACTION OF ARGENTINE MILITARY (PARA 12). SOLARI'S STATEMENT THAT "OTHER MILITARY PERSONS IN ARGENTINA WILL ACT TO TURN ARGENTINA TOWARD DEMOCRACY" STRIKES A TOTALLY HOLLOW NOTE HERE.

6. IN GENERAL SOLARI APPEARS TO BE RECOMMENDING US MILITARY-  
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ECONOMIC-FINANCIAL DISENGAGEMENT FROM THE PRESENT MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND, AT THE SAME TIME, US PROMOTION AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS, INCLUDING "OTHER MILITARY OFFICERS". OUR ASSESSMENT, SHARED BY VIRTUALLY ALL OTHER FOREIGN OBSERVERS AND MOST ARGENTINES, IS THAT THOSE MILITARY OFFICERS MOST FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD THE US AND MOST MODERATE ARE THE ONES WHO CURRENTLY PREDOMINATE IN THE GOVERNMENT. TO THE EXTENT THAT A SEPARATION CAN BE MADE, THEIR OPPONENTS WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES TEND TO BE HOSTILE TO THE US AND ULTRA-NATIONALIST. OUR IMPRESSION OF YOUNGER OFFICERS, WHILE LESS CLEAR-CUT, IS NO MORE REASSURING. WE HAVE BEEN HEARING SOME DISQUIETING REPORTS OF ULTRA-RIGHTWING NATIONAL SOCIALIST LEANINGS, SOMETIMES ASSOCIATED WITH CATHOLIC DOCTRINES, AMONG SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF YOUNGER OFFICERS. AT ANY RATE, AN OFFICIAL US POLICY OF DISENGAGEMENT IS NOT LIKELY TO MAKE POSSIBLE SOLARI'S SECOND RECOMMENDATION--THAT OF US SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS, PARTICULARLY OF THOSE WITHIN THE MILITARY, WHO ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY FURTHER US SANCTIONS ON THEIR GOVERNMENT.

7. SOLARI'S IMPLICATION THAT US POLICY HAS BEEN CUSTOMARILY GUIDED BY OUR SEARCH FOR ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE IS CONSISTENT WITH

HIS POLITICAL POSITION, AND MAY ALSO BETRAY THE OUTLOOK OF HIS ENTIRE GENERATION. MANY OF THOSE WHO LIVED THROUGH THE PERIOD WHICH MOST POIGNANTLY SHAPED SOLARI'S THINKING CREDITED PERON'S FIRST ELECTION TO THE OPPOSITION OF AMBASSADOR SPRUILLE BRADEN IN A KIND OF SHOWDOWN OF ARGENTINE NATIONALISM VS. "YANKEE ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM."

8. SINCE RECEIVING REFTEL WE HAVE RECEIVED BY POUCH THE ACCOUNT OF SOLARI YRIGOYEN'S CONVERSATION WITH MS. DERIAN AND MARK SCHNEIDER OF JUNE 28. IT ADDS CONSIDERABLY TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SOLARI'S BRUTAL IMPRISONMENT, AND AN APPRECIATION OF ALL THAT HE MUST FEEL TOWARD HIS TORMENTORS. EVEN TAKING INTO ACCOUNT HOWEVER SOLARI'S PERVASIVE HORROR OF THIS MILITARY REGIME WE FIND HIS DISPARAGEMENT OF VIDELA PUZZLING. CONSENSUS OF THIS CONFIDENTIAL

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EMBASSY, AND OF MOST OF OUR DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES INCLUDING THE NUNCIO, IS THAT VIDELA IS A MODERATE AND HONORABLE MAN WHOSE POWER DOES NOT REACH TO THE POINT OF BEING ABLE TO CONTROL EXCESSES IN THE "WAR" AGAINST TERRORISTS. WHILE THE CONSENSUS HERE COULD WELL BE WRONG, IT HOLDS THAT VIDELA'S DEPARTURE FROM THE ARGENTINE POLITICAL SCENE--FAR FROM OPENING A DOOR THROUGH WHICH DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THE CIVILIAN LEADERS MIGHT ENTER--WOULD REMOVE THE STRONGEST FORCE FOR MODERATION. THE REALISTIC ALTERNATIVES TO HIM ARE NOT PROMISING.  
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